United Nations A/57/401

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 September 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Item 67 (h) of the provisional agenda*
General and complete disarmament

Reducing nuclear danger

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/24 C of 29 November 2001, requested the Secretary-General to report on the steps he has taken towards the implementation of the seven recommendations identified in the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, including the proposal contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

The current report outlines a number of events that have contributed to the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Board. In this connection, the Secretary-General has concluded that the time is not yet ripe for the consideration of interim measures leading up to the convening of an international conference. In the area of education and training, the Secretary-General underlines the readiness of the United Nations to make a contribution to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education that is before the General Assembly at its current session (A/57/124). The Secretary-General reiterates his call on all Member States to renew their efforts to overcome their differences in the interest of international peace and security, not least in reducing nuclear danger.

* A/57/150.
** This report covers events up to 30 August 2002.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/24 C of 29 November 2001, requested the Secretary-General to take steps towards the implementation of the seven recommendations identified in the report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on reducing nuclear danger (A/56/400), that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, including the proposal contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration[1] for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

II. Recent activities aimed at the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

2. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, continue to be a primary concern of the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Advocacy of nuclear disarmament and the further strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime have continued to be part of United Nations activities in the context of the promotion of international peace and security in general and of disarmament in particular.

3. On 11 November 2001, in his opening remarks to the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in New York, the Secretary-General noted that the events of 11 September 2001 had highlighted the need to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and to maintain the momentum of efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world's arsenals. The Secretary-General affirmed that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a crucial element in the non-proliferation regime and that further delays in its entry into force not only would increase the risk that nuclear testing would resume, but also would make non-proliferation harder to sustain. The Secretary-General added that every effort must be made to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

4. The Secretary-General, in his message to the opening of the 2002 session of the Conference on Disarmament, called upon Member States to change the prolonged pattern of inactivity in multilateral disarmament and to bridge the divergent views and interests of Member States on mechanisms to deal with the two outstanding issues — nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Secretary-General further stressed that it was essential to begin negotiations on banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes.[2]

5. In addition, on numerous occasions, the Secretary-General has reiterated his call for the peaceful settlement of disputes and for confidence-building measures in areas of tension and has called upon relevant Member States to maintain a continuous dialogue aimed at resolving their differences through non-violent means.

6. The United Nations has continued to support initiatives by Member States, intergovernmental organizations, academic and research institutions and non-governmental organizations that promote a dialogue on security and disarmament issues, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs has represented the United Nations at numerous events that addressed nuclear issues, including a meeting organized by the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations on 20 and 21 April 2002, in Princeton, United States of America, aimed at brainstorming on the politics of nuclear weapons and the implications for strategic stability. Furthermore, the Under-Secretary-General has contributed articles to various publications, setting out the position of the United Nations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

7. A number of events addressing nuclear issues were also organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs. On 14 March 2002, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean held a regional seminar at United Nations Headquarters for the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, entitled "Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues — Towards the 2005 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference". The seminar contributed to fostering discussion on issues expected to figure prominently on the agenda of the forthcoming review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation

of Nuclear Weapons. The fifth Conference on Disarmament Issues organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific held from 7 to 9 August 2002 in Kyoto, Japan, addressed the impact of terrorism on international and regional security and disarmament. In that context, it discussed issues relating to improved physical protection of nuclear materials and the protection of nuclear facilities against sabotage. From 25 to 29 March 2002, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa cooperated with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization on following up on the implementation of a programme to encourage the universality of the Treaty in Africa. The Regional Centre in Africa also lent its support to a seminar for African States on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, organized by the International Atomic Energy Agency in cooperation with the Government of South Africa. The seminar, which was held from 24 to 27 June 2002, addressed in particular the role of safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

8. The Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Government of China jointly sponsored a conference entitled "Disarmament Agenda for the Twenty-first Century" at Beijing from 2 to 4 April 2002. Senior government officials, scholars, researchers, parliamentarians and representatives of NGOs from 29 countries participated in the conference. As part of the broader examination of disarmament and security issues, the questions of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear dangers were discussed.

9. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has long been recognized as an important contribution to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Accordingly, the United Nations has always been supportive of such initiatives, whether they relate to strengthening zones which have already been established or to the process of creating such zone. In that connection, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, in August 2002, visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the five countries negotiating the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The Under-Secretary-General held meetings at the highest levels to reiterate the support of the United Nations for the initiative and to extend any additional assistance that the Governments might need to conclude their negotiations.

10. The United Nations has also continued to lend its support to a variety of initiatives by the international community to promote and advance efforts aimed at the de-alerting of nuclear weapons, the review of nuclear doctrines and the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons.

11. As regards the proposal contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, the Secretary-General has concluded, on the basis of his consultations with Member States, that the time is not yet ripe for the consideration of interim measures leading up to the convening of such a conference. He will nevertheless remain seized of the matter and, as recommended by the Advisory Board, will continue to encourage Member States to endeavour to create the conditions that would allow the emergence of an international consensus to hold an international conference.

12. In the area of education and training, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/33 E of 20 November 2000, the Secretary-General appointed a Group of Governmental Experts to prepare a United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education. The study is before the General Assembly at its current session.[3]

13. The Secretary-General shares the finding of the Expert Group that there is a great need for disarmament and non-proliferation education to combat ignorance and complacency in the face of current nuclear dangers. The Group puts forward a series of recommendations to Member States, the United Nations, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations on ways to promote, individually and cooperatively, disarmament and non-proliferation education, with special emphasis on weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations stands ready to make its contribution to the implementation of the recommendations.

III. Conclusion

14. **In an atmosphere of continuing stalemate in multilateral deliberations and negotiations in the area of disarmament, the Secretary-General wishes to reiterate his call on all Member States to renew**

their efforts to overcome their differences in the interest of international peace and security, not least in reducing nuclear danger. For its part, the United Nations will continue to fulfil its mandate in contributing to reducing nuclear danger through advocacy for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the promotion of dialogue on proposals and new ideas and support for disarmament and non-proliferation education and information.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[2] See CD/PV.889, p. 4.

[3] A/57/124.